

Health and Welfare Canada Santé et Bien-être social Canada

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FOR PARENTS

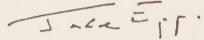
Action On Drug Abuse



I strongly recommend this booklet as a guide to help young people and their families take helpful steps to avoid drug problems.

There are three sections to the booklet. The first is a section for parents of pre-teens. The last is for young people approximately eleven to thirteen years of age. The middle section is for both groups. It contains basic information about drugs that can help guide the drugrelated decisions of people at any age. If you are a parent, you will want to begin your reading on the following page. You may also wish to discuss the middle section with your children. You can help them understand the ideas about drugs that are presented there, and together consider their relevance to the whole family's actions and attitudes toward drugs.

I hope this booklet serves as a useful guide for your family. Should you require any additional information or assistance, please feel free to contact your provincial or territorial addictions agency.



The Honourable Jake Epp Minister National Health and Welfare

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre, "Les drogues, on s'en parle."

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DECISIONS

As parents, we have a special role. Thinking like a parent. Doing the things parents must do. Doing the things parents love to do. Feeling the strong emotions that only parents can feel about their children.

At the same time, we are people. Sometimes we feel good about ourselves. Sometimes we have doubts. Sometimes we feel strong and in control. Sometimes we struggle. We wonder about how we are doing in this life. Are we achieving what we should? Are we good at what we do? Are we good parents? Will we be good parents when the future brings our kids real challenges like time away from home, cars, dating and sex, alcohol and other drugs?

The years just before our kids become teenagers can bring all of these thoughts to mind. Even before you left the hospital, there was someone there to say "She's so sweet...just wait until she's a teenager." Since then you can't count the number of times you've heard the same thing. And suddenly, your child is a teenager.

It is the person behind the label of parent who must handle the challenges of being a parent, and it is the person behind the label of teenager who, in time, must take on an adult role in an adult world. This is the scary part of watching your kids grow up. It's one thing to deal with your own blend of confidence and doubt, but to think about your kids taking on more and more, knowing their abilities and their weaknesses, leaves you wondering—Will they be OK? Will I be able to help them?

OUR KIDS CHANGE AND SO DO WE

It seems like such a short time from early childhood to the pre-teen years. Sometimes it seems our kids have grown up too quickly and know too much for their ages. But they really are not any different than we were at that age, and still require a great deal of support.

Over the next few years the changes will be even greater.

- Kids between the ages of 12 and 15 will begin to develop strong relationships outside the home. That means less time with family and less dependence on parents for help in decision making. During this time there will also be a greater questioning of ideas and values as young people begin to test their ability to tackle life's more difficult questions. This is the testing stage.
- From the age of 15 to 18, your teens gain more maturity and insight. They are better at thinking things through. Tastes and interests become more adult. This is a stage of self-examination.
- And finally, during the late teens and early twenties, their views of who they are and their values in life will be clearer and will guide them into the future.

As kids develop, so must parents. You may have felt this at every step along the way so far. If so, the future will be no different. Avoid mistaking their greater independence as a sign that you are no longer needed. This is a tough time of

important decisions about alcohol and other drugs, and they still need your understanding and support.

The key is to stay close enough to your kids to know how you can best support them as they progress from childhood to adulthood. Your overall relationship with your kids is very important. The decisions young people make about alcohol and other drugs reflect their feelings about themselves, and the people and situations they are dealing with day by day.

As they develop, your role will gradually change from the person who controls and protects them, to the person who acts as a guide or coach, a listener, and one who helps them think things through. Your goal must be to help them find the ability to run their own lives.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS... AS SEEN BY A YOUNG PERSON

By the time Canadian students get through high school, the majority will have done some drinking without the supervision of their parents. A relatively small percentage of student drinkers will drink quite heavily. Adolescents tend to drink in large groups together.

About one in five will try marijuana, hash or hash oil. There are smaller teen groups who will get into other illegal drugs such as cocaine, or LSD, the abuse of prescription or over the counter drugs or the sniffing of hazardous products referred to as inhalants.

If you stop and think for a moment, it will become clear that this pattern of drug use among the young is very similar to what is seen among adults. The majority of adults drink alcohol. It is known that many adults abuse prescription and over the counter drugs, marijuana or other illegal substances.

Teenagers are learning to become adults. This means learning how to relate to people, have fun, and deal with problems and emotions as adults. When a young person sees adults using or abusing alcohol or other drugs to help them cope, it is a strong message that promotes drug use. Add youthful curiosity, the urge to experiment, social pressures and an interest in challenge and risk, and it is not hard to understand why young people are attracted to drugs.

As parents, our challenge is to help our kids benefit from the learning experiences that are part of growing up, while avoiding the pitfalls drug use can bring.





WHAT CAN WE

A good starting place is to ask yourself if you are being realistic in the way you think about your kids and drugs now. Here are some common reactions that may need reconsideration:

- The schools look after it. They show them films and tell them what they need to know.
- Not my kid. She just isn't interested in that kind of thing.
- I tell my kid that drugs are for losers. He knows what I mean.
- Mv kids know a lot more about it than I do.
- I read about the signs and symptoms, and I keep my eyes open.

For a variety of reasons these ways of thinking are not very helpful. Schools rarely have the time or well trained personnel to do a good job with an issue like drugs. Most students will have to make decisions about alcohol or other drug use sometime. They will make those decisions surrounded by other kids and parents who do use alcohol or other drugs, and who in their eves are not necessarily losers. Unless they learn at least the basic facts about alcohol and other drugs, they will make those decisions with a lot of false information. And finally, waiting for visible signs of a drug problem is waiting far too long.

The realistic way to think about kids and drugs is to remember that it is something that will require tough decisions confused by emotion. "Should I get in the car? I think he's had too much to drink." "What am I going to do if they ask me to try it? "I know my parents don't want me to drink, but what's the

big deal?"

ERE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT COULD HELP

- Always remember that you are important to your kids. They notice what you say and do, even though it may not seem like it at times.
- Help your kids develop the skills to separate the truth about drugs from the mistaken ideas and myths that they will hear. The centre section of this booklet is a good place to start. After that, look for other reliable sources of information on specific drugs. Be prepared to sit down with your kids, and help them understand the things they read.
- A primary source of alcohol and other drugs, and the motivation or encouragement to use them comes from older siblings. Parents need to take this role model, as well as their own, into account as they analyze the family as a source of strength or weakness in helping adolescents refrain from drug use.
- Work hard at developing the ability to listen to your kids and to talk with them, and not at them. Remember that being able to talk with your kids will be an important way of staying in touch with their lives as they become more independent.
- Open your house to your kids' friends. It shows your interest, and gives you another chance to stay in touch.
- Demonstrate responsible, health conscious decisions with your own use or non-use of alcohol and other drugs. Remember that any use of an illegal drug is irresponsible because it violates Canadian law. Talk about the values that guide your decisions, and encourage your kids to think and talk about their drug-related values.

- Talk with your kids about predictable situations they will face, and help them to work out what to do in advance of these situations arising. Talk about how to avoid rides with impaired drivers including friends, dates and people for whom they baby sit. You will want to assure them that you will come and drive them home if they are in a dangerous spot. Recognize that they may well be nervous about trying alcohol when they are still very young, and let them know that it's a good idea to delay having their first drink until they are in their late teens or early twenties and are better able to cope with the resulting feelings and behaviours. Help them prevent the use of other drugs of any type unless taken under the direction of a doctor or yourself. Assist them in accepting the discomfort they will often feel when they first refuse to use or abuse alcohol and other drugs. Try to understand the circumstances they will have to deal with.
- ▶ Help them make sense of the lifestyles which include widespread use of alcohol, they see in advertising and TV shows. Look for opportunities to talk about what is realistic, and what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.
- Remember that young people have a strong need to feel more skillful and confident as they mature. They want to feel good about themselves while they are doing the things that are important to young people. If they do, they are less likely to have anxious feelings and selfdoubts that go beyond the normal doubts. It helps them understand that nervousness and discomfort are emotions we all feel, both kids and adults, as we make our way through the daily challenges of modern living. It is these kinds of anxieties and insecurities that can lead kids to look for easy ways to express their growing independence, get recognition or deal with their feelings. Just like many adults whose behaviour serves

as a poor example, kids too may turn to alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs in a search for the easy way out, rather than relying or talking out their problems with people they trust, respect, and who can give them guidance as they shape their lives. Help your kids find the feelings of confidence that come from knowing that they can be comfortable in talking to different people, doing different things, and being liked and respected. Do a variety of things with them. Encourage them to be independent and to choose challenges that are neither too difficult nor too easy.

- Let them learn that it is natural to have problems and to make mistakes. It is important to learn to work through tough times, and to understand and live with the consequences of their own actions.
- Remember that your respect means a lot. Help them feel good about themselves by recognizing their achievements. Don't put them down with casual negative comments, or your own need to show how capable you are. Take the time to let them know that you love them. A touch or a smile can mean a lot.
- ▶ Set guidelines for their behaviour, and be prepared to talk about your guidelines and to renegotiate them as maturity develops.
- If there is a problem don't withdraw your love and support. Try to determine if it is something that has happened once in a while or if there is a pattern of problems that may need professional help.

Parents would like to protect their children from problems like those involving alcohol and other drugs. Real protection, though, lies in the young person's sense of confidence and judgement, and in the ability to run his or her own life. As a parent, you can make a major contribution before and during the teen years.

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL Almost everyone uses drugs from time to time. Most

adults use alcohol wisely and safely. But some abuse it some of the time and a few abuse it frequently with the same deadly results as the abuse of other drugs. Medical use of legal drugs has been a benefit to the health of many people, but all drugs must be used with care and as directed. All around us we see both their good side, and the problems they can cause. When people think about drug problems, they usually think of all illegal drugs like heroin or cocaine. In fact,

there are major problems with the abuse of drugs intended for medical use and that of alcohol, the most widely abused drug.

Young or old, or in between, there are skills people need. Today, it is important to be able to think about different kinds of drug use, ask the right questions, and know where there might be problems. This means

the effects of each drug

naly controlled by them

Going through the points below should nelp you begin to make sense of it all. From there, you may need more detailed informathe way the drug will be used

that, as well as the effects of the drugs Before reading these points, remember themselves, there are laws and rules contion on specific drugs.

eelings about what is OK and what is not OK. These laws, rules and family standards have consequences that must also be talked Also, different families will have different cerning their use both at school and at work. about and considered carefully

Mood-changing drugs are those pon which people can become dependent hese drugs can be used over and over to change or addicted. This is partly explained by the fact now a person feels, and his or her life is increas-

ranguillizers, antihistamines and many others Being under the influence of drugs that defeating in situations where you need your wits about you. Drugs like alcohol, marijuana, affect your mind can be dangerous or self-

can make it dangerous for you to drive a car or difficult to do other things such as run a machine.

The greater the amount used, the greater the risk of having a problem. Medicine olay sports, or write an exam

taken in the amount directed by a doctor may be

ful or even cause death. Likewise, as the amount any of the illegal drugs taken increases, so nelpful. Too much of the same drug may be harm-

- Remember that all drugs have a possible risk - even the ones we take for granted.
 - Get good information about drugs before you consider using them. Consult pharmacists, doctors and unbiased written infor-Aim to avoid drug risks.
- When you need to be alert and sharp, avoid the use of alcohol or other drugs.
- time without checking out the possible Avoid taking more than one drug at results with a pharmacist or doctor
- often or too long. When in doubt, ask the Avoid drug use that is too much, advice of a doctor or pharmacist

Don't avnant deline to colve problems

the way we think, feel or behave. This includes the alcohol in beer, wine and liquor, the caffeine scription, various consumer products that can be in coffee, drugs bought off the shelf or with a presniffed, and street drugs like marijuana and LSD

people often talk about safe drugs and dangerous use them. For other drugs, problems occur when the truth is that even the drugs we tend to think of as safe can have serious risks. For some drugs the risk is high from the time a person starts to All drugs have risks. To simplify things, drugs, or soft drugs and hard drugs. However, a large amount is used or if used for a long time.

point #1 when they use them in ways which are a threat to their health and social well-being, or suffer harm from all of the drug types listed in Experience shows that people do, in fact, the well-being of others.

You have to be specific. When people ent from using tranquillizers and sleeping pills every day for months. However, we often hear alk about medicines they know that something aken once or twice for a headache is very differcomments about illegal drugs like: "that kid does drugs." A statement like this tells you almost nothing until you know what drugs are involved and how they are being used

The drugs most commonly abused are drugs that change or affect how a person changing drugs or psychoactive drugs. They nclude alcohol, all common street drugs, and thinks, feels or acts. They can be called moodmedications used to relieve pain, calm nervousness and aid sleep.

The more often a drug is used, the success and threaten life itself. Sometimes people medicine makes them feel better, taking more will make them feel better yet, but we know this greater the risk of having a problem. For instance, getting drunk can stand in the way of think that if taking the prescribed amount of can cause serious illness. Risk increases with the length of time and a variety of other drugs can lead to serious he users' problems will likely get worse as the a drug is used. Medicines used longer than needed can cause harm. The abuse of alcohol, health and social consequences and addiction. period of use gets longer. There are risks involved with drug may produce dangerous effects. This is because the combined effects of such drugs using more than one drug at a time. For example, taking more than one medicine at a time, or drinking alcohol while using a legal or illegal may be greater than expected.

The person using the drug reaction. Some may be more likely to become dependent on alcohol or other drugs. All of these things will affect what happens when someone uses a drug and it is often impossible to know makes a big difference. People using drugs react to a drug in the way that most other users of that drug react, or they may have an unusual what effect a drug will have on a person before or mental health and his or her reasons for using can be happy or depressed, cautious or careless, nealthy or mentally or physically ill. They may ne or she begins to use it. A person's physical he drug must be considered.

TINGS TO TALK

Here are some questions you may want to One of the best ways to sort out your feelings about something is to talk about it. discuss with your family or friends.

1. In what cases is the use of these types of drugs OK or NOT OK? Medications. Alcohol. Marijuana.

2. What is the difference between drug use which is not dangerous to your health and that which is unwise or unhealthy?

3. Why do adults use and abuse alcohol?

marijuana? Why might a teenager continue to use one of these drugs? Why might a 4. Why might a teenager try alcohol or ticular drug? Why might a teenager decide eenager decide not to start using a par-

ing with a driver who has been drinking or What are some good ways to avoid ridto stop using a particular drug? :aking other drugs?

6. How can a young person gracefully get out of accepting alcohol or other drugs?



what's right for you. it, you are back in control, and doing difference. With a minute to think about situation ahead of time makes all the and having thought about that kind of to do. Knowing what's important to you, happening it can be tough to know what you has been drinking. Hight when it's sug the person who is supposed to drive to get home from babysitting or a party, a joint or a drink. Or maybe you need ont somewhere and someone offers you kind of jump up at you. One day you are when you will have to make them. They sious is that you never know exactly The tricky thing about many drug deci-

under your arm. That's the easy part, but it doesn't make you any good on the board. In the same way, people try to look cool by using alcohol and other drugs. But most times it's just a way of hiding that they feel insecure and uneasy with themselves.

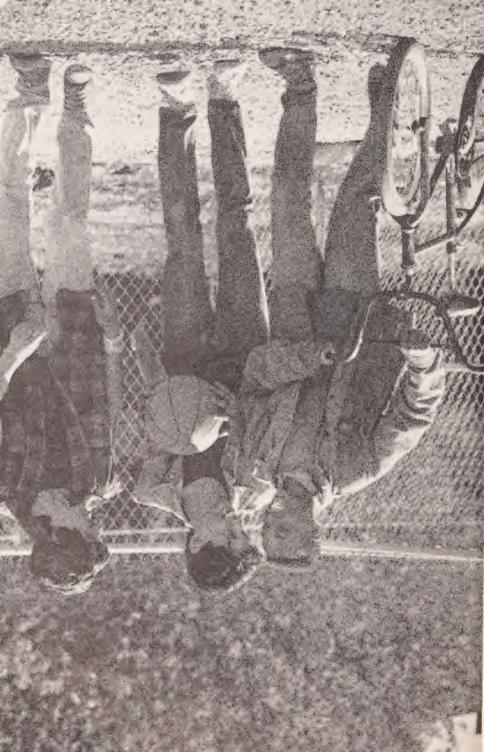
Secondly, by not thinking, you can get off track and allow yourself to go in a direction which leads to drug problems. It is hard to feel good about how your life is going the day after you get into big trouble at school because of drinking or

ofher drug use.

The decisions you make about drugs should be decisions that make sense when you stop and think about what is important to you. They should be decisions that leave you feeling good because you are taking control of your cause you are taking control of your own life. You are using your head to







drugs you may think you can take a off track in two ways. First, by using these Alcohol and other drugs can put you lnst tine as you move through your teens. step you get to be a person who will do you have never tried before. Step by discover that you can do something that teel a little more confident when you a new way to have fun. Another day you petter at talking to people, or let you find in life. Some things you do help you get everything else you have already learned take what you learn today and add it to with people and do more things. You you pick up as you spend more time feeling more sure of yourself are all things with people, being good at things and Being liked, feeling OK when you are So how do you get to be this way?

hottest board and walk around with it skate board. You can go out and buy the to be. It's like wanting to be good on a shortcut to the kind of person you want

SNOITSEUD

thinking about about drugs there are three things worth When you do take time to think

to feel less like a child and more like How do I want my life to be as I start

How am I going to become that someone older?

fit into the picture? How do alcohol and other drugs kind of person?

the things that happen to us, what really wish things could be different? In all of ns teel good? Why do we sometimes beoble we would like to be. What makes kind of people we are, or the kind of Often we don't think much about the

seems to matter?

things with good friends. We want to Most of us want to do interesting get what I'm after?" "Is it right for me?" you can ask yourself "Does this help me When an important question comes up ontselves it helps us to make choices. in our minds of what we really want for It we do take the time to get a picture

ourselves and what we can do. perfect, but we want to feel good about having us around. We don't need to be know that other people like us and enjoy

sport or going to a new school. ruings, such as trying a new meet people, and take on new as we spend time with friends, psugle whatever comes along We want to feel as if we can



things. you feel may get you interested in these fun. Changes in your life and the way ways of dressing and talking and having may come into the picture along with to you as a child. Alcohol and other drugs cially the things that have been off-limits that older teens and adults do...espeadult, you get interested in the things As you start to feel older and more

MORKING TOGETHER AND FEELINGS HONCHIS

Your thoughts help you to work out head that asks: "Where will this lead me?" Don't forget to listen to the voice in your maybe because your friends say "Try it." another drug — maybe out of curiosity you may get the urge to try alcohol or what I really want?" In the same way, in your head that says: "Stop; think; is this tion. You may torget to listen to the voice about the right way to deal with a situarather than sitting down and thinking Sometimes you act on your feelings

tun, get excited, and enjoy lite. You need problems. Your feelings help you have

them both.

tomorrow and next week and so on. for you, not only for right now, but for to think things through. Do what is best your head. Trust yourself and your ability take a moment to listen to the voice in give it much thought-you can always today - before you've had a chance to other drugs. And even if it happens when someone offers you alcohol or This will help you know what to say It is a good idea to plan in advance.

ECIZIONS

people. that drinking causes big problems for drinking, and then see a IV ad that says pretty neat talking about a weekend of older brothers and sisters, who seem You hear some older kids, including your gerous, and someone else says it's OK. Someone says a certain drug is daning is bad, and then do it themselves. really confusing. Adults may say drinkabout alcohol and other drugs can be years old, all of the talk you have heard By the time you get to be 12 or 13

parent thinks it is great fun, and may says drinking is terrible. Another friend's up their lives with drugs. A friend's parent styletes and rock stars who have messed feel better. Magazines have stories about supposed to make a cold or headache ads for beer and many things that are who use them. There are TV and radio ferent things about drugs and the people Everyday you see and hear a lot of dif-

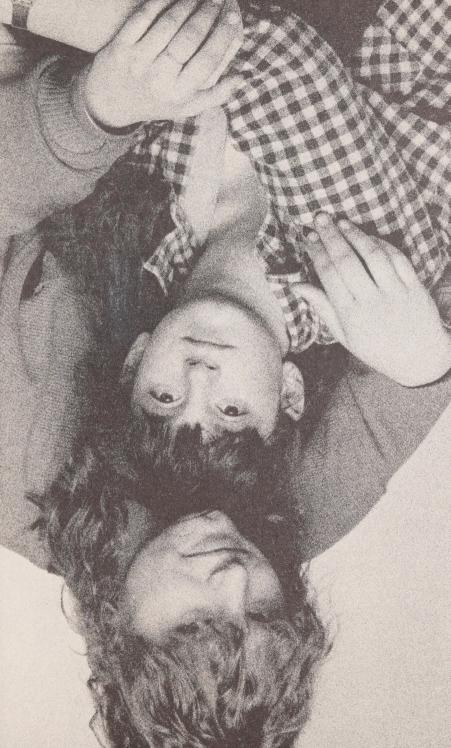
Making sense of all this can be tough. otter you a beer.

SHOITDARTTA

treats you as a child. When you get to be for by your parents, and the whole world While you are a child you are cared a big deal when you become a teenager. sud other drugs suddenly become such It is hard to understand why alcohol

At some point, you will see yourself as a self and you think of yourself in new ways. a teenager you want to do more for your-

young adult.





INTRODUCTION TO

NEWFOUNDLAND

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problems. families take helpful steps to avoid drug as a guide to help young people and their I strongly recommend this booklet

For more information or assistance, begin your reading on the following page. If you are a young person, you will want to related decisions of people at any age. about drugs that can help guide the druggroups. It contains basic information of age. The middle section is for both approximately eleven to thirteen years of pre-teens. The last is for young people booklet. The first is a section for parents There are three sections to the

provincial or territorial addictions agency. remember that you can contact your

National Health and Welfare Minister The Honourable Jake Epp

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